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USSR: Soviet scientists have gained permission to hold informal talks with their US colleagues on disarmament topics including the ABM question.

[redacted] repre-
sentatives of the Soviet Academy of Sciences have approval "from the top" to invite a group of US scientists to come to Moscow for unofficial talks. [redacted] the meeting is set for 28-30 December.

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[redacted] like some earlier meetings in this series, the gathering will not be publicized in the USSR for fear China would exploit it in such a way as to negate any good which might otherwise come of it.

Officially, the USSR has been noncommittal on the subject of bilateral negotiations on strategic weapons. The Soviets' public response to the US decision to deploy a thin ABM system has, however, not foreclosed the possibility of exploratory talks with the US, nor prejudiced its positions in the event that talks should develop.

Soviet scientists in encounters with US colleagues generally have favored arms-control negotiations. They have claimed that considerable opposition to negotiations exists, particularly in the military establishment.

The scientists' success in getting permission for the meeting suggests that Moscow is interested in exploring US thinking on the subject and in influencing a group of prominent US scientists. The Soviets may also wish to determine more clearly their own line in any subsequent official talks with the US.

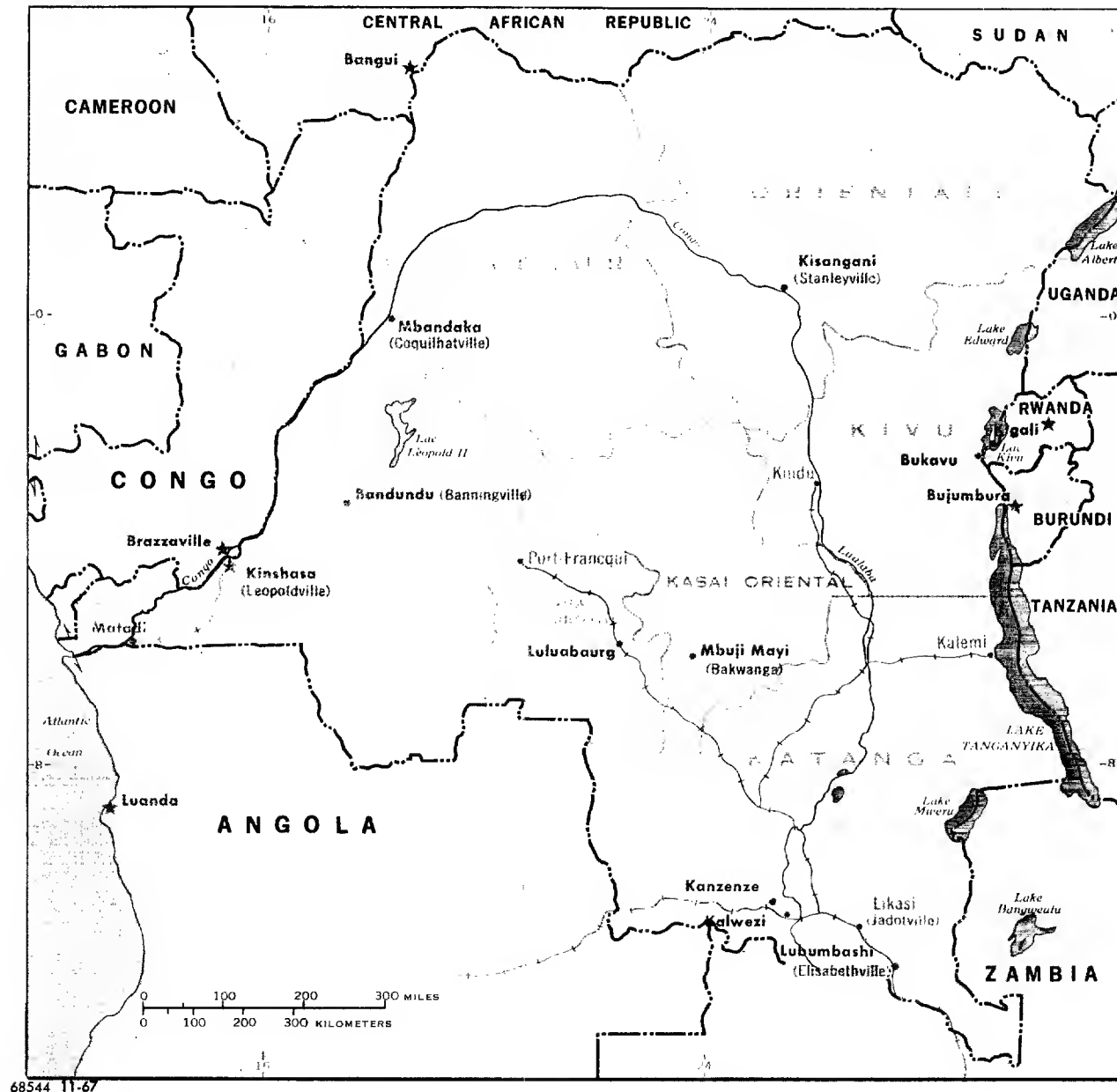
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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



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*Congo (Kinshasa): The limited scale of the mercenary invasion of Katanga suggests that it is a diversion to relieve pressure on Schramme or, perhaps, the opening phase of a larger operation yet to come.

The group of mercenaries and Africans heading across Katanga were spotted yesterday at Kanzenze, about 25 miles west of Kolwezi. Congolese paratrooper reinforcements who were flown in from Kinshasa are now in a blocking position west of Kolwezi. The Congolese Army, however, has a poor record for standing up against mercenary columns in the past.

Europeans in the important mining town of Kolwezi and in Lubumbashi remain calm. Most apparently believe that they have little to fear from the mercenary advance. Some Americans, including nonessential consular personnel and dependents, have been evacuated from Lubumbashi to Zambia.

President Mobutu has not yet ordered such actions as curfews or airport closings, which might create panic among Europeans.

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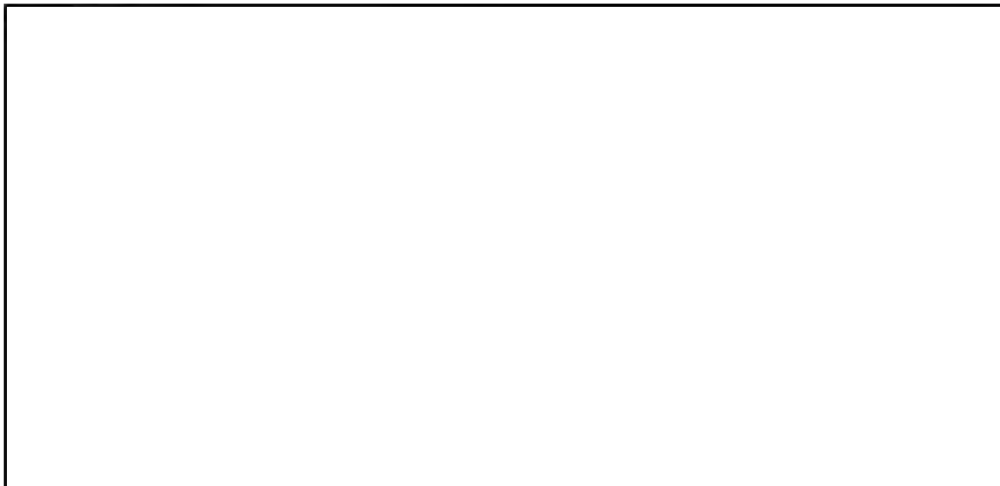
Meanwhile, the Congolese Army attack on the Schrammeled mercenaries and Katangans in Bukavu seems to be making limited progress. Supplies of the mercenary group may be running low.

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USSR-Nigeria: Moscow has revived its offer of economic aid to Nigeria. The Soviet ambassador has promised that the Soviets would initiate action on a \$56 million credit as soon as Nigeria makes a decision on development projects. [REDACTED]

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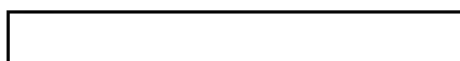
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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The Nigerian Government will face a considerable reconstruction task after the civil war and will probably be receptive to this offer. The Nigerians may also try to use it to pry additional aid from Western sources.

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